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THE REALIZATION OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Written statement submitted by the International Alliance of Women, the International Council of Women, the International Movement ATD Fourth World, the International Social Security Association, non-governmental organizations in consultative status (category I); the Baha'i International Community, Caritas Internationalis, the International Abolitionist Federation, the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, the International Association of Educators for World Peace, the International Council of Jewish Women, the International Federation of Rural Adult Catholic Movements, the International Federation of Social Workers, the International Federation Terre des Hommes, the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, the International Institute of Humanitarian Law, the International Movement for Fraternal Union among Races and Peoples, the World Federation for Mental Health, the World Federation of Methodist Women, the World Movement of Mothers, the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations, the World Young Womens Christian Association, non-governmental organizations in consultative status (category II); the Centre Europe-Tiers Monde, the International Movement against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism, the Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples, the World Christian Life Community, non-governmental organizations on the Roster

The Secretary-General received the following statement, which is distributed in accordance with resolution 1296 (XLIV) of the Economic and Social Council.

[8 August 1995]

GE.95-13586 (E)

"That day, when I arrived in the camp of the homeless of Noisy-le-Grand, I promised myself that if I stayed I would act in order that these families could go up the steps of the Vatican, the Elysée and the United Nations."

Father Joseph Wresinski, 1957

"We must stand together and say No! No to poverty! No to misery! No to all situations which undermine the dignity and the integrity of the human person."

Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali
at the Congress of Fourth World Families,
United Nations, New York,
17 October 1994

JOINT STATEMENT OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS ON THE OCCASION OF THE MEETING OF THE FOURTH WORLD NGO COMMITTEE AT THE UNITED NATIONS, 26 JANUARY 1995, AT THE PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA, IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES AND POPULATION GROUPS LIVING IN EXTREME POVERTY IN ALL COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, the NGO signatories of this statement reaffirm their attachment to the pledges made in the United Nations Charter:

"We the peoples of the United Nations ..."

Everywhere in the world, individuals, families and groups of population continue to live under the weight of insecurity, fear and contempt due to their extreme poverty.

These life conditions deprive them of the possibility of participating in social, political and cultural life. They cannot exert their right to be useful to others and to their country. They are unable to make use of their experience and of their thinking.

The NGO signatories of this statement wish that those living in extreme poverty be considered by all and specially by the United Nations system as indispensable partners to the building of a better world. And so, the poorest will be able to say together with others: "We, the peoples of the United Nations ... ."

"... determined to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person"

People in extreme poverty receive little benefit from the human rights belonging to all people. They are deprived of the means of showing their human dignity. It is now recognized that extreme poverty is a violation of human dignity.

The will to put an end to it means seeking a way to reach the poorest. It also requires respecting their human dignity through the programmes implemented in the struggle against extreme poverty and to make that the criterion in evaluating the realization of human rights.

"... have resolved to combine our efforts ..."

The very poor daily make moves in order to fight extreme poverty. These efforts are very often initiated from within the family, in the hope of building a better future for their children. Even if these efforts are often thwarted, they are persistently renewed. NGOs working alongside the poorest in the field are witness to these efforts.

The NGO signatories of this statement consider it indispensable when elaborating and enacting policies to fight extreme poverty that the efforts of the poorest are used as a basis for action.

in order "... to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom ..."

On the eve of the World Summit for Social Development, the elimination of poverty in its most acute forms must be seen as a priority.

The NGO signatories to this statement wish to draw attention to the efforts made by the international community within the United Nations towards the realization of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter, and specially to:

- The study on human rights and extreme poverty, requested by the Commission on Human Rights, the need for which the NGO Fourth World Committee constantly stressed and supported.

This study is innovative in two ways: for the first time it deals with the question of poverty in terms of human rights and, it is also undertaken with the participation of the poorest themselves and the NGOs working with them.

The NGO signatories to this statement agree with the terms defining extreme poverty linked to human rights proposed by the Special Rapporteur from the definition given by Father Joseph Wresinski in his report "Extreme poverty and economic and social precariousness". 1/

- The seminar on extreme poverty and denial of human rights which was an innovative experiment involving a partnership between the poorest and the United Nations (E/CN.4/1995/101).

The NGO signatories to this statement consider that this seminar, held from 12-14 October in New York, within the framework of the study on human rights and extreme poverty, was a real advance in partnership with the poorest in the United Nations.

For the first time in the history of the United Nations, it enabled experts, representatives of intergovernmental organizations and delegates of peoples living in extreme poverty, as well as people and NGOs involved with them, to work and reflect together and to make recommendations on how to fight extreme poverty.

- The celebration of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on 17 October.

The NGO signatories to this statement express their satisfaction that according to the decisions of the General Assembly and of the Commission on Human Rights, the poorest will continue to be at the heart of the celebrations organized for this day, a day which originated with them, and that on this occasion the links between extreme poverty and the full enjoyment of human rights were recognized.

Following the joint statements of the NGO Fourth World Committee since its beginning in 1978, 2/

the NGO signatories of this statement undertake to:

- remain attentive to the situation of the poorest in the world;

- continue to bring to the notice of the United Nations the reality of extreme poverty as it is experienced by the poorest and the effects this has on the exercise of all human rights, and to provide the Special Rapporteur responsible for the study on human rights and extreme poverty, Mr. Leandro Despouy, with relevant information;

- associate more than ever their efforts with those of the poorest by trying to build or promote partnership with them and to convey their experiences in the field to the Special Rapporteur.

* * *

In this year 1995, fiftieth anniversary of the birth of the United Nations,

the NGO signatories to this statement ask the United Nations, particularly on the occasion of the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen:

- that the reflection begun by the Special Rapporteur on human rights and extreme poverty in his preliminary report be pursued with a view to the elaboration of a universal definition of extreme poverty within the context of human rights;

- that reaching the poorest becomes a priority objective and that serious studies be carried out to find ways to do so;

- that everything be done within the United Nations Organization to bring about a real partnership between itself, the people living in extreme poverty and those working with them. This partnership must be achieved in a framework of programmes and reflections undertaken for the promotion and realization of human rights, economic and social development and for permitting access to education and

culture. This partnership should be developed as much when putting these programmes into action as in their elaboration, evaluation and follow-up.

And so such a partnership should be established enabling measures to be taken for the follow-up and the evaluation of the decisions which will be taken at the World Summit for Social Development.

* * *

Finally, the NGO signatories to this statement support and wish to disseminate and make known the Final Statement adopted at the World Congress of Fourth World Families held in the United States, 10-20 October 1994.

This statement can be obtained at the secretariat of the Fourth World NGO Committee. Tel/Fax: 344 47 77

Notes

1/ Journal Officiel de la République française, Avis et Rapports du Conseil économique et social, Paris, 12 février 1987.

2/ In particular the NGO appeals for the International Year of the Child (1979) and the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations (1985), the joint declaration on the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (1987), the joint declarations published under the symbols E/CN.4/1989/NGO/46, E/CN.4/1990/NGO/59, E/CN.4/1991/NGO/37, E/CN.4/1992/NGO/33, E/CN.4/1993/NGO/10, E/CN.4/1994/NGO/38 and 39.